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LETTER DATED 17 MAY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter addressed to you from Tekeda Alemu, Vice-Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The letter is primarily to draw your attention, and through you the attention of the Security Council, to a very dangerous development in Somalia caused by Eritrea's involvement in the conflict in that country.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

99-14509 (E) 170599

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Annex

Letter dated 14 May 1999 from the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to draw your attention to a very dangerous development in Somalia caused by Eritrea's involvement in the conflict in that country. Recent eyewitness accounts (Integrated Regional Information Network, 6 May 1999; Associated Press, 6 May 1999; Agence-France Presse, 28 April 1999; and Reuters, 5 May 1999) reveal that Eritrea has embarked on a large-scale military activity of destabilization in Somalia in support of one of the warring factions in that war-torn country through shipments by air and sea of arms, including heavy weapons, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 733 (1992).

The reports make it abundantly clear that Eritrea has embarked on a policy of further destabilizing Somalia - a country with which it does not even share borders. Not being limited to the shipments of arms and heavy weapons to Somalia in violation of the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council in its resolution 733 (1992), Eritrea is now engaged directly in military activity in Somalia. The presence in Somalia of Eritrean troops taking part in the civil war and with the ultimate objective of destabilizing the whole area is a dangerous development for which Eritrea would have to bear the full consequences.

The leadership in Asmara, which seems to have no wisdom to assess the consequences of its irresponsible activities, appears to be determined to ensure that Somalia remains mired in a state of lawlessness and chaos. The ultimate objective of this irresponsible policy of destabilization for the realization of which Eritrea also appears to be working hand-in-glove with an assortment of terrorist groups, is too transparent to need detailed explanation. But it must be stated quite categorically that Eritrea's objective is aimed at Ethiopia, as can be corroborated by the attempt being made by Asmara to organize anti-Ethiopian terrorist groups from around the world for deployment in Somalia and along the common border between Ethiopia and Somalia. Eritrea is thus playing with fire.

While the countries of the region, in collaboration with partners, including the United Nations, have been engaged in seeking ways and means of promoting national reconciliation in Somalia, Eritrea has chosen to promote further instability in Somalia and to make reconciliation in Somalia an impossible task and a hopeless and distant dream.

Eritrea is thus making it obvious that it is becoming a menace to peace in the Horn of Africa and a State whose preparedness to violate international law has no limits.

It is very relevant in this connection to draw your attention to the fact that the current destabilization activity in Somalia is being carried out by a country, which, prior to its latest aggression against Ethiopia, had launched attacks on and caused hostilities with three of its remaining four neighbours

sharing common borders with Eritrea. Eritrea has now gone even further by expanding its aggressive activities to a country with which it shares no common borders but which obviously does with Ethiopia. Eritrea's objective is thus plain. It would indeed be strange if Ethiopia were to be expected to sit idly by without responding to this mindless provocation.

Although the first victims of this destabilization activity by Eritrea are the people of Somalia, who have already made their concerns known (Agence-France Presse, 9 May 1999; press release by Puntland, 13 May 1999), it is also plain, as already alluded to, that the developing situation is of direct concern to Ethiopia, which is the ultimate target of Eritrea's lawlessness and its manifest promotion and sponsorship of terrorism.

It is therefore appropriate and necessary for the Security Council to condemn Eritrea for these dangerous activities it is carrying out in Somalia and for its violation of the embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Somalia.

As this is being written, Eritrea is feverishly stepping up its involvement in Somalia, in causing tensions to rise in that country and in organizing terrorist missions aimed at Ethiopia. Intelligence reports indicate that more war matériel and contingents of Eritrean troops are on their way to Somalia by air and sea. The Security Council cannot remain indifferent to all these dangerous violations of principles of international law by Eritrea and to the activities currently being carried out by Eritrea, which constitute a threat to the peace of the subregion and to the security of the countries of the area, including Ethiopia.

In the meantime, Ethiopia reserves its right to take the appropriate measures in defence of its national security and in response to the menace created by a country which experience has shown has no respect for international law and for norms of civilized behaviour.

(Signed) Tekeda ALEMU
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs